

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
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FM AMEMBASSY OSLO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3856
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: BASQUE PRISONER ARRIVES IN NORWAY

REFS: (A) MADRID 4285 (B) STOCKHOLM 2355 (C) OSLO 2460 (D) OSLO 1396

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED - SUMMARY: THE FIRST OF THREE EXPECTED BASQUE
POLITICAL PRISONERS ARRIVED IN OSLO JUNE 1 AND HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE

JUNE 3. FOREIGN MINISTER FRYDENLUND INDICATED THE GON HAD AGREED
TO A SPANISH GOVERNMENT REQUEST TO ACCEPT THE BASQUES. END SUMMARY.

1. RECENTLY RELEASED BASQUE POLITICAL PRISONER, IRIAKI SARASQUETA,
SAID IN PRESS CONFERENCE IN OSLO JUNE 3 THAT HE WISHES TO RETURN
TO SPAIN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, BUT UNFORTUNATELY POLITICAL
CONDITIONS THERE PREVENT HIM FROM RETURNING SOON. SARASQUETA
ARRIVED IN NORWAY JUNE 1 BY SPANISH MILITARY AIRCRAFT AFTER
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RELEASE FROM NINE YEARS IN SPANISH PRISON. HIS WIFE
IS HERE WITH HIM.

2. SARASQUETA IS EXPECTED TO BE JOINED IN NORWAY SOON
BY TWO OTHER BASQUE PRISONERS, JAVIER IZKO DE LA IGLESIA AND
JOSE ANTONIO GARMENDIA ARTOLA WHO ARE REPORTEDLY STILL
UNDERGOING THE FORMALITIES OF PROCESSING IN SPAIN.

3. FOREIGN MINISTER FRYDENLUND ANNOUNCED JUNE 1 THAT NORWAY HAD AGREED TO RECEIVE THE THREE BASQUE POLITICAL PRISONERS AT THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT'S REQUEST. HE SAID THE GON AGREED TO THE REQUEST BECAUSE IT BELIEVED IT WOULD HELP THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT TO CONDUCT THE UPCOMING ELECTION, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT WITH THE BASQUES HELD IN PRISON. FRYDENLUND STATED NORWAY WAS ONE OF SEVERAL NORTHERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES REQUESTED TO GIVE POLITICAL ASYLUM TO SOME 19 BASQUE PRISONERS. THE MINISTER INDICATED THE SPANIARDS' STAY WOULD PROBABLY BE SHORT AND THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE THE BASQUES WOULD BE ABLE TO RETURN TO SPAIN WHEN THE SITUATION THERE RETURNS TO NORMAL.

4. IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE SARASQUETA DENIED HE HAD KILLED A POLICEMAN IN 1968 AND SAID HE HAD BEEN UNJUSTLY CONVICTED. HE SAID HE WAS PROUD OF HIS FORMER MEMBERSHIP IN THE BASQUE ORGANIZATION, ETA, BUT THAT HE IS NO LONGER AN ETA MEMBER. HE WAS IN GOOD PHYSICAL CONDITION THOUGH HE CHARACTERIZED HIS HANDLING IN JAIL AS BRUTAL. HE SAID THE JUNE 15 SPANISH ELECTION WILL BE SIGNIFICANT FOR POLITICAL REFUGEES IN EXILE. BASQUE POLITICAL PRISONERS, HE THOUGHT, WOULD BE RELEASED BEFORE THE ELECTION, THOUGH OTHER POLITICAL PRISONERS MIGHT NOT. HE SAID IN GENERAL HE WAS SATISFIED WITH ACHIEVEMENTS BY THE BASQUES TO GET PRISONERS RELEASED AND HE THOUGHT SPANISH AUTHORITIES WOULD FULFILL BASQUE DEMANDS AFTER THE ELECTION. "IF THAT DOES NOT HAPPEN, THE FIGHT WILL INTENSIFY," HE SAID. END UNCLASSIFIED.

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5. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. ACCORDING TO MFA SOURCE, SARASQUETA AND HIS WIFE ARE BEING SPONSORED BY THE NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL AND ARE HOUSED IN AN OSLO APARTMENT. SPANISH AUTHORITIES APPROACHED GON OFFICIALS IN MADRID ON MAY 19 TO ASK IF THE NORWEGIANS WOULD ACCEPT THE PRISONERS, WHO HAD SPECIFICALLY ASKED TO GO TO NORWAY. THE GON REPLIED AFFIRMATIVELY THE FOLLOWING DAY, SAYING IT WAS WILLING TO ACCEPT FIVE SUCH PRISONERS. THE GON ACCEPTANCE, WE BELIEVE, SHOULD BE SEEN AS ANOTHER STEP IN THE DIRECTION OF RESTORING BALANCE TO NORWAY'S LONG STRAINED RELATIONS WITH SPAIN IN THE PAST (REFTELS C AND D), AND IT WAS GENERALLY WELCOMED BY ALL NORWEGIAN POLITICAL LEADERS. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. ANDERS

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